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GENEVA FOR RMA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/11/2017
TAGS: [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [TH](#) [LA](#)
SUBJECT: THAILAND DEPORTS ANOTHER GROUP OF HMONG

REF: BANGKOK 3191

Classified By: AMBASSADOR RALPH BOYCE, REASONS 1.4 (B, D).

11. (U) This is an action request. Please see para. 7.

12. (C) Summary. Thai police on June 9 deported 161 Hmong from four jails in Petchaboon Province to Laos. It is unclear what degree of force may have been used during this action. Embassy has requested the RTG to look into an NGO report that one of the Hmong may have died. It appears that five persons who had UNHCR status or were close relatives of one of the Hmong leaders in detention at Nong Khai were removed from the deported group by the Thai and remain in Thailand. Ambassador expressed concern about this large deportation to MFA PermSec on June 11. End summary.

13. (SBU) Thai police deported 161 Hmong to Laos on June 9 in the early morning from four jails in Petchaboon Province where the Hmong were detained. According to Thai police statements to the Embassy on June 11, 53 persons were deported from Tha Phong, 23 from Nachalieng, 50 from Lomsak, and 35 from Khao Kor. They were taken from those sites to Udorn and then deported into Laos from Nong Khai. Several NGO reports said that the police used tear gas, beatings, and electric batons to move the Hmong onto trucks. Embassy does not have independent confirmation of these reports. When asked by the Embassy, police officials denied that force had been used and MFA officials said they had received no reports of force. Another NGO report said that one of the Hmong had died during the deportation, but it was unclear whether the reported death occurred in Thailand or Laos. Refcoord requested the Thai MFA on June 11 to look into this report, indicating that it would be a serious matter if the report proved true. Refcoord also reiterated U.S. opposition to any deportations without screening.

14. (C) Embassy previously had information that a husband and wife, Theng Lor and Yer Lee, respectively, at the Khao Kor facility had UNHCR status. When asked whether this pair was deported, Khao Kor police said that the two were not deported because they had "escaped" and were now believed to be at the large Hmong settlement site in Huay Nam Khao in Petchaboon Province. In a subsequent conversation, Thai MFA officials said that the Thai had intentionally let these two go because they had UNHCR status. The wife and two children of a UNHCR-recognized Hmong refugee leader in detention at Nong Khai were among the group in detention at Lom Sak. It is likely that UNHCR would have granted these three persons derivative refugee status had it gained access to interview them. Embassy checked with the Thai police on these persons and it appears that they were not deported. While we have no independent confirmation, it therefore seems that these five persons of particular concern remain in Thailand.

¶5. (SBU) UNHCR Representative Hasim Utkan told Refcoord on June 11 that he was in contact with Geneva headquarters and expected that UNHCR would issue a statement critical of the deportation. The UNHCR High Commissioner might also call in the Thai Ambassador to express UNHCR opposition to the deportation.

¶6. (C) The Ambassador called MFA Permanent Secretary Virasakdi Futrakul on June 11 to express concern about the deportation and in particular the lack of screening. Virasakdi responded that those deported were all new arrivals and therefore subject to deportation in accordance with Thai law. Five persons were pulled out from those in detention and not deported because they were persons of concern. (Note: This seems to corroborate the information above.) For the larger group of almost 8,000 at the Petchaboon site, the RTG was preparing a screening system. Virasakdi noted that the group of 156 in detention at Nong Khai would not be deported. Ambassador stated that new arrivals, not just the larger group at Petchaboon, might have legitimate concerns of mistreatment if sent back to Laos. Virasakdi responded that if the U.S. knew of Hmong with valid refugee claims among new arrivals, it could provide the names of those persons to the RTG. Virasakdi noted that the RTG had also told UNHCR that it was not to do further refugee status determinations on Hmong.

¶7. (C) Action request: Embassy requests that Department issue a statement expressing concern about this Hmong deportation. Suggested points will be conveyed separately. Embassy would use such a statment here to show U.S. concern about this development.
BOYCE